(b) if so,, what are the details thereof and the reasons of increase in visa fee;

(c) what is the amount of additional income that is likely to be derived as a result thereof;

(d) whether Government are aware of its negative impact on inflow of tourists to India;

(e) whether there have been protests especially in Malaysia and Singapore against this hike;

(f) if so, what steps Government are taking in this regard; and

(g) whether Government propose to reconsider its decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Visa fee which prior to November, 91 was different for different nationalities and different for single double|triple|multiple entries have been now rationalised, it now depends upon duration of its validity. Reasons for increase in visa fee are:

(i)In 1990 the visa regime was liberalised and the duration of visa was extended upon 5 years but the visa fee was not appropriately increased.

(ii) The recent devaluation of Indian rupee made it imparative to revise the visa fee upwards.

(iii) Indian visa fee was reduced unilaterally in favour of nationals of UK; USA; FRG; France; Spain; Italy and Netherlands. But these countries did not reciprocate to our action.

(iv) Increasing local cost of running consular and visa services at Missions|Posts abroad.

(v) Mobilising funds or proper staffing and modernisation of the Consular Section in our Mission abroad, for further improving the quality of services.

(c) Rs. 100 crore (approximately) over a year.

(d) and (e) The upward revision of visa fee is not likely to materially affect the inflow of tourists. Tourists are not attracted so much by low visa fee as by other conditions facilitating tourism such as peace and tranquility, tourist infracture expeditious services etc. As a matter of fact visa fees are a very small fraction of the total expenses incurred by a tourist. However there have been some representations against the increase in visa fees.

(f) and (g) The Government policy in the matter is constantly kept under review.

Import of Cotton

273. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal with the Central Government to import cotton;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) what is the quantity and value of cotton proposed to be imported; and

(d) what is the coal foreing exchange commitment involved therein?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Cost of production of coal

274. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) what is the cost of production of coal in different collierjes in the country;

(b) what is the cost of production in comparison with other countries; and

(c) what are the reasons for high cost of production in our country and what steps are being taken to reduce the cost of production?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI S. B. NYAMAGOUDA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on Table of the House.

Srilankan charge against India for Aborting SAARC Summit

275. SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY:
SHRI RANJIT SINGH:
SARDAR JAGJIT SINGH AURORA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the reported Srilankan accusation against India of sabotaging the SAARC summit meeting; and

(b) if so, what measures the Government of India have taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Official Spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs has, through Press Statements of November 6, 7 and 13 given a full account of the stand taken by the Government of India. Propriety and principle require that Heads of State/ Government of all Member States should be enabled to participate in SAARC Summits. The very essense of SAARC Summit is decision by unanimity through personal consultations among the Heads of State/ Government. The suggestion to hold Summit meetings with representatives or substitutes would adversely affect the long-term and larger interests of SAARC.

Subsidies to Handloom Weavers

276. SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of weavers of Delhi Pradesh Dalit Samaj surrendered "Charkhas" at the Samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October, 1991 in protest against Government's policy of previding subsidies to handloom weavers vis-a-vis their colleagues working in mills;

(b) whether it is a fact that the National Textile Corporation employ only one lakh workers in their mills while the handloom industries give employment to 15 lakh workers;

(c) whether it is also a fact that during 1988-89. Government granted only Rs. 35 crores as subsidy to handloom industry whereas Rs. 285 crore subsidy was given to National Textile Corporation Mills; and

(d) if so, whether there is any proposal with Government for the fresh reappraisal of the subsidy policy for the greater interest of a large number of handloom workers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT): (a) Government is not aware of any such incident.

(b) The National Textile Corporation provides employment to about 1.70 lakh persons including officials. According to the National Handloom Census (1987-88), about 65.33 lakh persons are engaged in the preparatory and weaving activity in the handloom sector.

(c) No, Sir. During the year 1988-89 a sum of Rs. 27.80 crores was released to the National Textile Cor-